

Echinacea

Common name: Purple Coneflower

Family: Asteraceae

Parts used: aerial parts and root



Native Americans used it for a variety of conditions including external treatments for infected wounds and venomous bites. It was first introduced into U.S. medical practices in late nineteenth century.

Classification of Herbs by the American Botanical Council

Class 1: can be safely consumed when used appropriately

Class 2A: external use only

2B: not to be used during pregnancy

2C: not to be used during lactation

2D: has contraindications for specific diseases

Class 3: only to be used under supervision of expert in the area it is treating (i.e. cancer, HIV, heart disease)

Class 4: not enough information to make claims about its safety and efficacy

Hazards of Herbal Use

- Self (mis) diagnosis and treatment
- People may neglect conditions
- Symptoms of serious illness may be masked
- Treatment may be delayed in serious cases
- Allergy
- Toxicity

Echinacea - class 1



- “Cold fighting” herb, upper respiratory tract infections
- Claim: an immune booster, prevents and relieves cold and flu symptoms; used topically to heal wounds
- Side Effects: short-term fever, nausea, or vomiting
- Potential allergy: Individuals allergic to Asteraceae (Daisy) family should not take

People Misuse in 2 ways

- Don't take echinacea every day! Studies have shown that taking echinacea for longer than 2 months at a time may cause immune system problems.
 - Echinacea could cause hepatotoxicity and therefore should not be used with other known hepatotoxic drugs, such as anabolic steroids, amiodarone, methotrexate, and ketoconazole.
- Take it at the first signs of a cold. If you wait more than 3 days, it's probably too late – it is not effective at this point.

Echinacea

- Reported uses:
 - Colds
 - Flu
 - Upper respiratory tract infections
 - Inflammation
 - Infections
 - Wounds
 - Chronic Ulceration's
- Warning: may be contraindicated in those with diabetes, lupus, TB, HIV, multiple sclerosis, or other auto immune diseases



Dosage

No well-controlled studies have evaluated the appropriate formulation or the dosages that are available on the market.

- **Adult daily dosage is 150 to 300 mg 3x/day (with 3.5% echinacoside), or**
- **6 to 9 ml of expressed, fresh juice, or**
- **1.5 to 7.5 ml of tincture (preferred because not all the constituents are water soluble) or**
- **2 to 5 g of dried root.**
- **Usual Dosage for Tea: Seep ½ teaspoon root in boiling water for 15 minutes. Drink 2-3x/day**
- **Children: No Studies conducted to date – Use with Extreme Care**

Zink T, Chaffin J. Herbal 'health' products: What family physicians need to know. Am Fam Phy: October 1,1998.

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- Evidence from published trials suggests that Echinacea may be beneficial for the early treatment of acute upper respiratory infections
 - Barrett B, Vohmann M, Calabrese C. Echinacea for upper respiratory infection. J Fam Pract 1999; 48(8): 628-35 1999



Reputable Resources

- Books
 - Germany's Commission E
 - Similar to our FDA.
 - Has conducted a lot of research on safe use of herbs.
 - *Herbs of Choice* by Varro E. Tyler
 - *American Pharmaceutical Association's Practical Guide to Natural Medicines*
 - *PDR for Herbal Medicines*
- Magazines
 - *Consumer Reports & Consumer Magazine*
 - *Herbal Gram*

Reputable Resources

- Internet Web Sites
 - National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health
 - <http://nccam.nih.gov/>
 - American Botanical Counsel
 - <http://www.herbalgram.org>
 - Office of Alternative Medicine
 - <http://www.altmed.od.nih.gov/oam>
 - RxList – Alternatives
 - <http://www.rxlist.com/alternative.htm>
 - Quack Watch
 - <http://www.quackwatch.com>



More Questions about Herbs?



- Tell your health care provider what herbs you are taking!
- Other questions about herbs or dietary supplements...contact a dietitian for more information.

- Clinical Dietetics (202) 782-2007
- Wellness Center (202) 782-0907

